

The German Tribune

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Foreign policy growing rapidly more expensive

In Brussels a few weeks ago Nato Defence Ministers resolved to invest billions in bolstering the West's military muscle. This response made sound sense in view of the Soviet arms build-up and has yet to encounter criticism.

Then came the North-South conference in Paris at which sixteen leading industrialised countries and nineteen major commodity suppliers agreed on an aid programme to the Third World that will, in the long term, similarly involve expenditure in the thousands of millions.

In principle the decisions reached at the North-South talks are likewise deemed indispensable and have been welcomed by all Western governments.

Meanwhile the Bonn government continued to backtrack on value added tax at home. It now envisages a VAT increase of one (rather than two) per cent next year from eleven to twelve.

The decision to halve the VAT increase will mean 4,000 million deutschmarks less in additional revenue, but the domestic economic recovery is making such slow headway that the government's decision to opt for discretion rather than valour seems well advised.

Taken on their own, each of these three decisions makes sense and a good case can be argued for all. They were, of course, reached independently, yet the measures resolved in Brussels and Paris seem likely to be more indicative of the future strain on the country's finances than the VAT intermezzo.

The price of foreign policy is increasing by leaps and bounds. This is particularly true of priority sectors such as

conventional army in Western Europe. Yet politically the Federal Republic is only a medium-sized power.

Bonn makes no attempt to turn its economic and military position to its own advantage, still less to capitalise on its position to the detriment of its partners' vital interests. Any attempt would, in any case, probably founder on unanimous resistance by the others.

"I warn everyone against striving for German leadership in an economic or any other European context," the Chancellor told the Bundestag on two occasions.

Yet although Helmut Schmidt takes good care to pursue foreign policies or foreign trade policies solely in conjunction with other Nato countries or members of the EEC, a number of neighbours are casting suspicious glances in Bonn's direction.

In view of this country's undeniable strength they wonder whether Bonn might not, on the quiet, be trying to overdraw on its opportunities of exerting political influence.

The fact that many countries are in debt to Bonn is also a drawback. Creditors are never very popular. Yet everywhere this country is expected to make a special economic and financial effort to strengthen the West — in Europe, in Nato and in the North-South dialogue.

In all three sectors we must, however, mobilise our relative strength to an increasing extent on behalf of political solidarity within the West and to restore the world economy to an even keel.

First, the EEC budget has virtually quadrupled in the course of the seventies, mainly due to the mysterious exigencies of Common Agricultural Policy. CAP accounts for three quarters of the Common Market budget, 24,000 million deutschmarks. Bonn foots the lion's share of a bill that is also bound to increase.

The forthcoming extension of the EEC to include Greece, then Portugal and later doubtless Spain will likewise result in costs spiralling. All three countries have a low GNP and too great an emphasis on agriculture. They lack efficient industries.

Their membership may be politically advantageous, but there can be no gainsaying that bridging the economic gap between them and the more affluent members of the EEC will cost a small fortune.

A passing glance at the other members of the Common Market is sufficient to indicate that Bonn again will have to foot an above-average share of the bill.

The only factor that is likely to offset this burden is that the purchasing power of new Common Market members will increase and that, as experience has shown, this country will be the principal beneficiary in its capacity as an industrial exporter.



Kenneth Kaunda visits Bonn

Zambia's President Kenneth Kaunda and his wife Betty, with this country's President Walter Scheel, and his wife Mildred, in Bonn on 3 June. President Kaunda also had talks with the Minister for Economic Cooperation Marie Schiel, who said that Bonn would increase its financial and technical aid to Zambia. This will include capital aid of DM80 mill. which is DM10 mill. more than was promised during Frau Schiel's recent Africa tour.

Second, the London Nato summit attended by President Carter was followed by a meeting of Defence Ministers at which Nato countries agreed to step up defence spending as demanded by the United States.

The increase envisaged is three per cent per annum in real terms; in other words, it will more than offset inflation rates. What is more, it is to be concentrated on arms expenditure.

Countries in reduced economic circumstances will be spared the full brunt of the proposed increase, with economically sounder countries shouldering more than their fair share.

This means that Bonn, for one, will no longer be able to increase defence spending at a lower rate than budget increases as a whole, as has hitherto been the case.

The European members of Nato, this country in particular, had no option but to agree to Mr Carter's demand. At the London summit they agreed with the US President that the Soviet arms build-up has assumed alarming proportions and accepted the alternatives. Either the East bloc cuts back on arms expenditure or Nato will have to step up defence spending.

Above all, they do not regard Mr Carter's commitment to the Western alliance ("Nato remains the cornerstone of US foreign policy") as an entirely unconditional pledge.

A number of European leaders reckon the greater defence endeavours Mr Carter has called on Europe to undertake are an ultimatum in all but name. Either Europe steps up its defence commitments or the United States may conduct a political or strategic policy review.

The trouble is that although Bonn will no doubt comply with the Nato decisions reached in Brussels other countries may well backslide, persuaded that this country's efforts alone will prove sufficient to save Nato from decline or decay.

Yet Bonn would very much prefer Nato not to shrink gradually to a special

defence relationship between this country and the United States.

Third, the North-South conflict is a meeting point of many of this country's political and trade interests. The Paris talks reached symbolic agreement on a \$1,000 million programme to aid the poorest developing countries, towards which Bonn is to contribute \$300 million.

But the really expensive part of the North-South agreement will be the programme to stabilise commodity prices that was discussed in Paris but will not take shape until the forthcoming Unctad conference at the earliest.

Bonn anticipates a bill of at least \$5,000 million that the industrialised countries will be required to foot, with this country contributing eight per cent towards this total.

This estimate, however, is based on the optimistic assumption that Bonn can rely on the support of other industrialised countries in its resistance to the Group of 77's demands for astronomical amounts.

In addition to a moratorium on the debts of the poorest developing countries and a gradual increase in development aid from 0.3 to the agreed level of 0.7 per cent of GNP, the extra cost will be at least a further 4,000 million deutschmarks on the Bonn budget.

In view of the sums involved one may well wonder whether this country is not biting off more than it can chew. Can Bonn shoulder all these burdens without jeopardising its own stability?

This country does, after all, have more than enough problems of its own. They range from unemployment to an urgent review of welfare provisions. What is more, people continue to expect a further increase in living standards.

In his government policy statement last December Helmut Schmidt made it clear that it is wishful thinking to believe that future growth will enable the State to increase its benefits to the taxpayer.

Kurt Becker
(Die Zeit, 3 June 1977)

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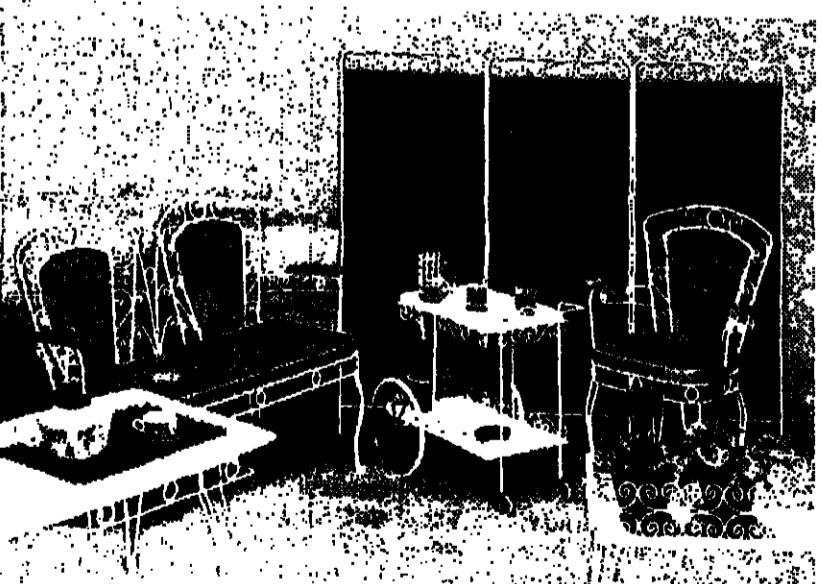
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MEDICINE

Infectious diseases are still hard to eliminate

Infectious diseases are not yet under control, said Professor Hans-Joschim Weise, of the Federal Health Office, in Berlin, speaking at the Congress of the German Association for Combating Children's and Other Virus Diseases and the German Green Cross in Munich.

According to Professor Weise, most of today's infectious diseases are connected with our modern way of life and are therefore hard to eliminate. They can certainly not be wiped out by protective vaccinations alone. He pointed out that vaccination must be supplemented by far-reaching social, economic and hygiene measures.

Though our high degree of civilisation has eliminated — or almost eliminated — many types of bacteria and viruses, it has also provided a new breeding ground for some of them. The interplay between virus host and environment is out of kilter, and for many potential bacteria the "ecological niche man" has become attractive once more.

Professor Weise drew particular attention to the spread of venereal diseases. Of all infectious diseases reported last year, 34 per cent were transmitted by sex, 36 per cent by inhalation and only 30 per cent orally.

The reasons for this change in the pattern of disease transmission and for the shift to the sex organs are the "promiscuity of affluence", "hidden prostitution", "sex tourism", illegal immigration of foreign workers and growing carelessness in the use of contraceptives.

Diseases transmitted by animals are also on the increase, having reached 15 per cent.

Another alarming element is encephalitis resulting from ticks.

This so-called tick encephalitis, which was formerly known only in Eastern-Eu-

rope, has now spread to the Federal Republic of Germany — especially to southern Baden, Lower Franconia and Lower Bavaria. This disease affects not only farm and forest workers, but also hikers.

Professor Weise attributed the spread of salmonella to mass animal husbandry and modern meat processing methods.

The changing course of infectious diseases — so to speak a new marching order of viruses — which can best be explained by migration and adaptation of the various kinds of viruses requires new methods in the immunisation of the jeopardised and the treatment of sick people.

The usual protective vaccination frequently comes too late or serum from weak or dead bacteria obtained from animal blood is not sufficiently effective. In some instances alien protein leads to so-called serum diseases resulting from over-sensitivity.

There are however changes in the offing in that sector. It will soon become feasible to produce serum from human blood and to use it for the prevention and cure of diseases. The Munich Congress devoted two days to this

The DM300,000 Ernst Jung Prize for medicine — the Federal Republic of Germany's financially most rewarding prize — has been shared by a German and an American researcher.

The German immunologist Professor Georg Springer of Evanston, Illinois, and the American internist Professor John West of La Jolla, California, personally received the prize in Hamburg.

The award was instituted by the Hamburg businessman Ernst Jung in 1975 and was first awarded last year following Herr Jung's death.

asking for its product by name at the dealer's where they have their prints framed.

Cardboard manufactured in the immediate post-war years is the worst, Franz Josef Knubben maintains. It contains so much chlorine, ammonia and ferrous sulphate that paper mounted on it rots in next to no time.

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Chipboard also has a high acid rating and corrode paper that is mounted on it. Passe-partout only conserves the print when it is non-acidic and allows sufficient air to circulate.

Acrylic glass or a plate glass frame without passe-partout deprive the print of air and accelerate its decay. Acrylic glass also charges the paper fibre with static electricity, speeding up the process of decomposition.

Plastic frames make a print sweat. Safes may keep thieves at bay, but their contents grow too dry, with results even worse than theft. A work of art that has been stolen may at least be recovered; one that has disintegrated is gone for good.

Steel filing cabinets, on the other hand, are like a sauna bath — except that paper does not take kindly to this treatment.

Rosemarie Böls
(Deutsche Zeitung, 20 May 1977)

subject with its many still open questions.

The substances making it now already possible to administer "passive vaccination" instead of the active form by animal serum against certain infections are protein antibodies.

They form in people who have been vaccinated against infectious diseases or those who have weathered them. But the production of an effective serum requires blood plasma from between 1,000 and 2,000 people.

Such passive immunisation provides instant — if only temporary — protection. It can be used in emergency cases as in the case of bites from a dog suspected of being rabid or in case of diphtheria.

This method is also extremely helpful in cases for which there is no active immunisation as yet, as for instance infectious hepatitis or encephalitis.

This type of vaccination can also be used for mumps and measles (according to Professor Weise, both these diseases are latterly gaining in importance).

Passive vaccination can also be used in cases of tetanus, German measles and smallpox (once this vaccination is no longer compulsory). It can also help mothers with a negative rhesus factor to develop antibodies, thus preventing danger to the child.

A considerable number of applications for the production of such vaccines has been received by the Federal Office for Serums and Vaccines. Karl Stankiewicz
(Frankfurter Neue Presse, 21 May 1977)

Two share Ernst Jung prize for medicine

The prize is awarded for medical discoveries which "are already helping man" — always on 18 May, Ernst Jung's birthday.

Professor Springer was awarded the prize for developing a skin test by means of which early diagnosis of breast cancer and other malignant tumours has become possible.

The method is relatively simple and similar to the tuberculosis test. Successes so far have been excellent, according to Professor Springer. The medical principle underlying this test could also possibly be used for the cure of malignant growths. Medical tests are still in progress.

Professor West received the prize for fundamental work on the oxygen absorption of blood in the lungs. He discovered that the functioning of the lung is considerably affected by gravity which is particularly conspicuous in cases of shock or in the case of emphysema of the lung.

According to the Jung Foundation committee, Professor West's work led to considerable progress in the treatment of accident cases and lung diseases.

The practical application of his findings has already greatly benefited innumerable people suffering from respiratory ailments throughout the world.

Professor Springer has lived and worked in the United States since 1951, but has retained his German citizenship.

The internist, Professor West, comes from Australia. He accompanied Sir Edmund Hillary during his 1953 conquest of Mount Everest in order to be able to study breathing at great altitudes.

dpa
(Kleiner Nachrichten, 23 May 1977)

Too-short limbs can now be lengthened

People with limbs of different length due to illness usually feel handicapped, especially when the legs are affected. They have to wear orthopaedic shoes, which are conspicuous and aesthetically unsatisfactory.

As a result, these people frequently prefer to do without such aids, which leads to an awkward and unhealthy posture.

Corrective surgery has also left a good deal to be desired. The only choice left to surgeons was to shorten the healthy leg by removing a section of bone — mostly from the thigh.

The result is that both legs are consequently of equal length while the patient as a whole has become shorter; thus out of proportion. The length of stride is shortened and frequently the knees are at different heights.

As a result, a new method of treatment is being worked on at various surgical centres in the Federal Republic of Germany. This involves leaving the healthy leg untouched and stretching the short one by up to 22 cm.

The advantages of this method have recently been explained by Professor Heinz Wagner, head of the Orthopaedic Clinic of Altdorf near Nuremberg, by means of photographs of patients.

The success of this type of treatment is startling. It enables surgeons to stretch the femur and, in some instances, the fibula to such an extent within a matter of months that the formerly badly malformed patient requires a perfectly normal appearance.

In one case it was possible to stretch the legs of a child suffering from achondroplasia by 13 cm. The same method can also be used to stretch arms.

Professor Wagner described the procedure as follows: A long metal pin is inserted at the upper and lower ends of the bone to be stretched. These pins protrude through the skin.

The bone is then sawn through in its centre and a telescopic extrusion mechanism is attached to the pins. From the on the patient himself controls the growth of his leg by turning a knob on the telescope by 1.5 mm a day.

New bone tissue forms where the bone has been sawn through, lengthening it. However the lengthened bone must be supported by a steel plate at the end of the treatment.

This new method could restore normal appearance to people who have hitherto depended on unsightly orthopaedic shoes.

But since the operation is rather complicated and requires a great deal of surgical know-how, Professor Wagner recommends that only a limited number of patients be treated in this manner: above all young people between the ages of 8 and 20 where the difference in length of the limbs is at least 4 cm.

In all cases this method requires the cooperation on the part of the patient. In the case of children suffering from dwarfism Professor Wagner says: "The argument that dwarfs measure less than 110 cm cannot integrate in society because, for instance, they cannot reach a bank teller's window or use a public telephone is perfectly valid. But even so, an operation is only indicated if the patient is likely to cooperate and if it can be expected to achieve an extension of the patient's height by more than 10 cm."

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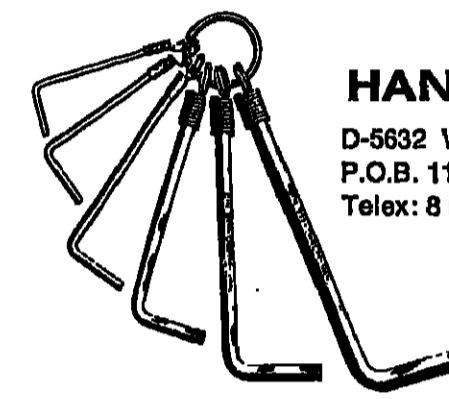
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